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O'Callaghan, M. (2016). Ireland, Empire and British Foreign Policy: Roger Casement and the First World War. *breac, Online*, [Online].

Published in:
breac

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
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Ireland, Empire, and British Foreign Policy: Roger Casement and the First World War

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The parliamentary party should drop forever from the vocabulary of nationality the names of Wolfe Tone, the men of 98, Robert Emmet and the men of 48 and the fenians—not to speak of Red Hugh etc etc—the great British democracy does not understand the allusions in any case. They should substitute Cromwell, Raleigh, Good Queen Bess, Pitt and Lord John Russell.

—Roger Casement, July 1916¹

There is enough in this to hang me ten times over. The question is—not is it treasonable but is it true?’ And again ‘If I thought this in my heart then would I not have been a cur if when the hour I did not bring to pass struck I had not tried to put my convictions to the test.’

—Roger Casement, July 1916²

Roger Casement wrote an average of about three-thousand words on most days of his adult life.³ During his various consular postings he wrote detailed reports on every aspect of his work. His report on the savagery of Leopold’s rubber quest in the Congo was officially published in severely mutilated form as *Report for Lord Lansdowne; Correspondence and Report from His Majesty’s Consul at Boma respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo*.⁴ In 1912, material from his similar or analogous investigation into slavery and exploitation in South America was incorporated into another British government official publication—another blue book. In response to the public campaign generated by the report, Charles Roberts M.P. was appointed by the Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith to chair a parliamentary select committee into the Putumayo affair. As part of his evidence, Casement submitted the journal of his investigation to Roberts in January 1913. It is this text, available in both manuscript and typescript versions in the National Library of Ireland, that Angus Mitchell has edited and through which he has restored Casement to his former position of **vital** important human rights campaigner.⁵

Through the high public profile of the campaigns around the Congo and the Putumayo, Casement not merely had access to a cohort of Liberal intellectuals and a press profile, but had relations with senior figures within the Foreign Office, in particular one of its most senior members, Sir William Tyrrell.⁶ As Angus Mitchell has shown, Casement’s relationship with

¹ Roger Casement, prison writing, July 1916, [MS2], The National Archives, Kew.

² Roger Casement, handwritten annotation in the text of Casement’s *Ireland, Germany and Freedom of the Seas: A Possible Outcome of the War of 1914* (New York and Philadelphia: Irish Press Bureau, 1914), July 1916, Home Office (HO), 144/1636/311643/44/32A, The National Archives, Kew, London.

³ See Séamas Ó Síocháin, *Roger Casement: Imperialist, Rebel, Revolutionary* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2008).

⁴ *Correspondence and Report from His Majesty’s Consul at Boma Respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1904), Parliamentary Papers 1904 (Cd 1933) 62; for a digital version, see <https://archive.org/stream/CasementReport/CasementReportSmall#page/n1/mode/2up>.

⁵ See Angus Mitchell, *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement* (Dublin, Lilliput Press, 1997). See also Mitchell, *Sir Roger Casement’s Heart of Darkness: The 1911 Documents* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2003).

⁶ Basil Thomson’s report of interrogation of Casement copied to Major Hall (MI5) and Captain Hall, KV 2/7, National Archives, Kew. According to a contemporary official account, Casement asked to see William Tyrrell. “Because I am in great difficulty. Not about myself. I know my own position quite well, but not as far as I am at liberty morally to answer any question. It may involve other people.” For Tyrrell’s career, see Zara Steiner “The Foreign Office under Sir Edward Grey, 1905-1914” in *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. F.H.

the Tory Prime Minister Lord Salisbury and with the Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain was at stages of the Boer War relatively privileged. Due to this access, his immersion in colonial matters for decades, and his extraordinary network of fellow-campaigners, sympathetic businessmen, leading clerics, and various members of the political elite, Casement's analysis of high political intrigue was often well-informed and based on a personal knowledge of many of the key political actors. Earlier biographers and analysts of Casement, most notably Rene MacColl or B.L. Reid,⁷ tended to represent him as a marginal crank of the consular service, distant and removed from any key movers and shakers of the time; but recent research confounds this view.⁸ It was therefore from this informed perspective as an at least partial insider that Casement understood and put together his analysis of the strange history of the politics of the campaign for Home Rule for Ireland between 1893 and 1910. He locates that history in a broader context of British Foreign and Colonial Policy.

That analysis is explicitly stated in an article published posthumously in the journal *The Irishman*, edited by the highly eccentric Herbert Moore Pim.⁹ Called "The Secret Diplomacy of England," the article was, according to the editors, made available to them in February 1916, when Casement was in Germany and publishing widely in the German press.¹⁰ His thesis in this work is that the governmental direction of foreign and imperial policy and Irish policy were not separate matters but intimately linked, from the point at which Gladstone introduced a Home Rule Bill for Ireland in 1886:

That failure of Liberalism in Ireland brought with it the permanent eclipse of Liberalism as a power in foreign affairs, and left those to be controlled, without question, by the influences which had opposed Mr Gladstone's Irish policy as treachery to the majesty of England, and which had hurled the Liberals from office (in 1895) on the ground that justice to Ireland was treachery to the empire, and the disruption of the Kingdom.¹¹

Here Casement's argument contrasts the position before 1886, when he argues British foreign policy was the topic of vigorously contested election campaigns—Gladstone's pursuit of a moral foreign policy as in the case of Bulgarian atrocities as the most acute example—with

Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 22-69. William Tyrrell was in fact on leave due to a breakdown as a result of the death of his son on the Western Front in the spring of 1915. He did not return to the Foreign Office until August of 1916.

⁷ See Rene Mac Coll, *Roger Casement: A New Judgement* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956) and B.L. Reid, *The Lives of Roger Casement* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1976). See, too, Michael Laffan's more recent characterization of Casement in similar terms in his "The Making of a Revolutionary: Casement and the Volunteers, 1913-14" in *Roger Casement in Irish and World History*, ed. Mary E. Daly (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2005), 64-73.

⁸ The consular service was socially in a very different league to the elite Foreign Office and the diplomatic service but Casement's personality, reputation, and contacts transcended many of the usual barriers. On the consular service see D.C.M. Platt, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls since 1825* (London: Longman, 1971).

⁹ On Pim, see Patrick Maume, "Pim, Herbert Moore," *Cambridge Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007) and also Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Sinn* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 70-72. Originally published in *The Irishman*, Vol. 3 on March 9, 1918 and republished in the program produced for the symposium *Roger Casement and World History* held at the Royal Irish Academy in May 2000.

¹⁰ Originally published in *The Irishman*, Vol. 3 on March 9, 1918 and republished in the program produced for the symposium *Roger Casement and World History* held at the Royal Irish Academy in May 2000.

¹¹ Casement, "Secret Diplomacy," *The Irishman*, Vol 3, March 9, 1918; but see also Casement, "A Study of Sir Edward Grey," *The International* 10, no.1 (January 1916), 9, <https://books.google.com/books?id=7YJAAQAAMAAJ>.

what he sees as the definitively altered position, particularly after the return of the Unionists to power under Lord Salisbury in 1895. By claiming the high imperial ground on Ireland, the Tories, he argued, claimed it in all other areas. By the time of the Boer War, according to Casement, with marginal Liberal dissent, foreign policy was effectively bipartisan and conducted behind closed doors, not in the forum of public discussion.¹²

The Empire, imperilled by Liberalism, was safe in the hands of those who had detected the crime, and of these no questions need be asked. [...]

With the return of Lord Salisbury to office in 1895, with a clear mandate to do as he pleased, the question of Parliamentary discussion of foreign affairs may be said to have been settled.¹³

Casement appears to be reflecting a widespread complaint in radical Liberal circles particularly after the Boer War in this analysis. Certainly from the establishment of the Committee of Imperial Defence under the guidance of Arthur Balfour in the post-Boer War atmosphere of 1902,¹⁴ foreign and imperial policy except in its jingoistic popular aspect is represented by critics as being conducted at a high level of secrecy.¹⁵ Casement says that this does not alter when the Liberals come in with a landslide in 1906 and the Foreign Office passed to Edward Grey, who is viewed by what Casement characterizes of the inner circle as a “safe pair of hands.”¹⁶

Rosebery’s abjuring of Home Rule for Ireland through his predominant partner speech—in which he postponed introducing a Home Rule measure until there was a majority in favor of it (not just in the United Kingdom as a whole, as there clearly was, but a majority specifically in England)—was, Casement says, endorsed by Edward Grey, in Casement’s own hearing, at Chesterfield in 1901. Casement’s core point is that the Liberal front-bench, and in particular its Liberal Imperialist cohort, acquiesced in what he represents as a Tory-driven secret

¹² See Peter Stansky, *Ambitions and Strategies: The Struggle for Leadership of the Liberal Party in the 1890s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); and H.C.G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists: The Ideas and Politics of a Post-Gladstonian Elite* (London: Oxford UP, 1973).

¹³ Casement, “A Study of Sir Edward Grey,” 10.

¹⁴ The Committee of Imperial Defence has a contested history. See Franklyn Arthur Johnson, *Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885-1959* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1960) and John P. MacKintosh, “The Role of the Committee of Imperial Defence before 1914,” *English Historical Review* 77, no. 304 (July 1962), 490-503.

¹⁵ See K.G. Robbins, “The Foreign Secretary, the Cabinet, Parliament and the Parties, in *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*, 3-21. This text points to the “bipartisan tradition maintained” by Asquith’s invitation to the Conservative Arthur Balfour to serve on a subcommittee of the CID in 1908. One of the key disputes about the Foreign Office in this period was the extent to which radicals alleged that Grey conducted foreign policy with minimal cabinet consultation in the grip of anti-German voices among the senior officials in the Foreign Office. Casement’s critique in this area is within a pre-existing English frame of the radical representation of foreign policy. This frequently overlapped with a liberal and labor radical critique of the British Empire. See Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa 1895-1914*. In my article “‘With the eyes of another race, of a people once hunted themselves’: Casement, Colonialism and a Remembered Past,” I have pointed out the extent to which Casement and Alice Stopford Green were part of a network of New Liberal circles in London in these years; see O’Callaghan, “Casement, Colonialism and a Remembered Past,” *Roger Casement in Irish and World History*, 46-63.

¹⁶ There are a number of biographies of Grey. The most interesting is probably G.M Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon: The Life of Sir Edward Grey* (London: n.p., 1937). See also K. Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallon* (London: Littlehampton Book Services, 1971) and the more idiosyncratic and unreferenced volume by Michael Waterhouse, *Edwardian Requiem: A life of Sir Edward Grey* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013).

undemocratic foreign policy to secure the Empire and deny Home Rule to Ireland. For Casement, imperialism, anti-Germanism, and the abandonment of a Liberal commitment to Ireland were of a piece. The Liberals had, as far as Casement was concerned, long abandoned any real commitment to Home Rule by 1912; in fact, his analysis of the Council's Bill of 1908 is central to developing this view.¹⁷ In his view the Liberal cabinet was tacitly collusive with the Conservative and Unionists, with whom they had already contemplated coalition, in their subversion of the British constitution to so mutilate Home Rule for Ireland as to make it effectively worthless.¹⁸

¹⁷ On the devolution proposals that precede the Council's Bill of 1908, see Casement (in Ballycastle) to Alice Stopford Green, 8 September 1906, MSS 10,464 (2), National Library of Ireland: "Santos in a few days. I got an offer of another consulate after Santos, but have stuck to the one I decided on. Sir Edward Grey was charming—we talked about Congo and about myself too. I wish Ireland had a better outlook. I don't like this Devolution scheme at all. The outline already published by the *Daily Chronicle* is, I fear, substantially correct—and it is a pitiable piece of jugglery for a 'Home Rule' British government to introduce. Instead of 'settling' Ireland it is going to unsettle things horribly. That I can see clearly—for it will cause far greater friction, and will at the best only create a new 'Castle' and class dependent on it. In God's name what Ireland wants is Responsibility. [...] Until the public here feel they must tackle the state of their own country and abide by their own acts there can be no real improvement. We have to create a governing mind again after one hundred and six years of abstraction of all mind from this outraged land. We had once all the elements of a healthy national life in our midst—and because she feared us possessing those England destroyed our Constitution, jiggled our mind out of our body into hers, and left us only a 'corpse on a dissecting table.' How we are to get back any healthy national consciousness thro' this Conciliation Scheme I fail to see, and I think Mr Griffith is more than justified in his criticisms of the whole lot—Sir Anthony MacDonnell included. *I am going to back my Napoleon up all I can and give his paper as much help as I can spare.*" [Emphasis added] The "Napoleon" to whom he refers is Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Féin and key editor of "advanced nationalist" newspapers, in particular *United Irishman*. Casement contributed money to his publications, wrote for them under a variety of pseudonyms, and broadly supported his policies.

¹⁸ See Casement to Stopford Brooke, 27 June 1907, MSS 10,464 (2), NLI on the Irish Council's Bill: "I like your paper on the Convention and the Council Bill and of course I approve your action and that of all Ireland in rejecting it. I'm more and more glad every time I think of it. It has taught a lesson to more than the English. We needed, and need, the air cleared in Ireland—it is at home the conquest of Ireland is to be effected. England didn't beat us by talk but by invading our land and we shall get her methods and her soul out of Ireland only by ourselves, staying there. (It's easy to preach this in Santos you'll say, but I'm right, altho' myself a living picture of what an Irishman should not be. I saw by a telegram in the Brazilian papers a few days ago that Redmond and co had broken with the Liberals on the ground of 'the inspection of conventual establishments.' In the name of God—what an object to break with them for. Is there any limit to the fatuity of this so-called 'matchless leadership'? I think Sir A MacDonald and Redmond have become, both of them, disasters to Ireland. The innate loyalty of our country makes us stick to the latter—but he is a terrible burden. This parliamentary absurdity must be stopped. [...] We should realise that as long as we go on 'appealing' to and supporting Englishmen in the hope that they'll do 'something' for Ireland we shall be sold. Hopelessly sold. Their one view of life is to make—to get—to have—to possess. Ireland is a bit of real estate belonging to them; that is their view of it. Their policy has been, most consistently, and most wisely to exploit her in their interest—and every so-called gift to Ireland is but to enable them to continue the exploitation profitable under circumstances that alter. Neither Liberal nor Tory has any feeling about Ireland except as Englishmen—that it was brought into existence for their benefit—and since that is a bit crude they have invented the term 'Empire' to represent them and their aims. How to break the bond I don't see—no one on earth can see it; but that it must be broken and that it shall be broken I never doubt. [...] I'm mighty glad you were at that Convention and that you have spoken out so strongly to your branch of the UIL. Try to get them to see that Sinn Féin is not their enemy. We should all be Sinn Féiners at heart and in theory and in practice—even if we are UI Leaguers or anything else. Any alliance between Irish nationalism and the English parties is impossible—from the nature of things [...] England is very [...] and very selfish and very full blooded and the closer she binds Ireland to herself the less Ireland will there be. The policy has never deviated for an instant—it is the most remarkable instance in human history (recorded history at any rate) of a deliberate purpose carried on for centuries. The only more remarkable thing I know is the protean Irish resistance. Weak, ineffective, disorganised, seemingly purposeless, constantly obscured and submerged, yet it has been there all the time, and the almost unconscious purpose of this thrice-conquered, wholly devastated and seemingly utterly lost people will, in the end I believe outlive and triumph over the power and pride of the exploiter." See O'Callaghan, "Democratisation and Polarisation in Ireland: The Covenant and

British foreign policy in the pre-First World War years has, since some excellent studies in the 1960s and early '70s, been predominantly interpreted by British historians of the right.¹⁹ Casement's work is a possible way to reexamine aspects of the politics of the pre-First World War years. Until the recent ~~flurry in response to~~ centenary commemorations, these years have been unconsidered for decades—with the possible exception of the important work of Paul Kennedy.²⁰ Thomas Otte's recent analysis of what he calls the "Foreign Office mind" opens up one way of reconsidering this period, as does Christopher Clarke's *The Sleepwalkers*, a fascinating reexamination of the high diplomacy and ~~deep~~ background of the outbreak of the First World War.²¹ British historians of the left, or of the liberal center, have avoided discussions of the Empire, the causes of war, and foreign policy in general, for three generations. Over the past decade in Ireland, death in the trenches of the First World War is represented as a magnificent sacrifice in a just cause, in marked contrast to those who fought in Ireland in the period from 1916 to ~~"23, whose actions are analyzed in terms of social insufficiency, pathological bigotry, crazed ideas of blood sacrifice, or murderous impulses."~~²²

Casement is ~~perhaps~~ the most prolific writer of the Irish revolutionary leaders, with the exception of James Connolly, although only a fraction of his political writings are available. Through his writings he presents a sustained critique of British imperialism that integrates the historical experience of Ireland with that of the Empire and wider foreign policy. His relationship with the historian Alice Stopford Green is central to this analysis.²³ His analysis puts Ireland at the core of the British imperial project, and sees dislocated or damaged cultures as the ineluctable consequence of particular forms of colonization.²⁴ Owen Dudley Edwards has suggested that Casement "mugged up" on Irish history in the years after 1911,²⁵ but it is clear that he was widely read in Irish and other histories, that he was an intellectual, and that in most contexts he thought through historical analogy.²⁶ Following his investigations of what he saw as crimes against humanity in both the Congo Free State and

the Third Home Rule Bill," (paper presented at the Third Home Rule Crisis: Centenary Perspectives conference, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, May 25, 2012) in which I quote from meetings between "opposing sides" in the Home Rule situation at time of the Buckingham Palace conference. For the full paper, see <https://www.ucd.ie/ibis/filestore/Margaret%20O'Callaghan%20-%20The%20Covenant%20and%20the%20third%20Home%20Rule%20Bill.pdf>.

¹⁹ ~~Classic explorations of origins of WWI G.P Gooch and Harold Temperley [Margaret — this note is unclear to us. Can you rephrase, or provide more information?] British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914 (HMSO, 1926-34)~~

²⁰ Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870-1945: Eight Studies* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983).

²¹ Thomas G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013) and Christopher Clarke, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2013)

²² Hence the enormous inflation in the reputations of interesting figures like Tom Kettle and Francis Ledwidge. See my essay "Political Formations in Pre-First World War Ireland: The Politics of the Lost Generation and the Cult of Tom Kettle" in *From Parnell to Paisley: Constitutional and Revolutionary Politics in Modern Ireland*, ed. Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid and Colin Reid (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 56-77.

²³ See my analysis of Casement's relationship with Alice Green in a forthcoming collection of essays ~~edited by G-illian McIntosh and Tina O' Toole for UCD Press. [Marg. — has this been published? Is there a title and bibliographical information you wish us to include?]~~

²⁴ For a discussion of Bernard Porter's views of Casement's critique of the British version of imperialism and my response to that view, see O' Callaghan, "Casement, Colonialism, and a Remembered Past," 56-58.

²⁵ Owen Dudley Edwards (paper presented at the Casement in Irish and World History Conference, Royal Irish Academy, May 2000).

²⁶ For a study of Casement's adolescent immersion in Irish historical material, see O'Callaghan, "Casement, Colonialism, and a Remembered Past," 46-63 ~~in Mary E. Daly (ed) Roger Casement in Irish and World History (Royal Irish Academy, 2005).~~

the Putumayo Casement was increasingly frustrated by what he considered to be the limited and self-serving view that the Foreign Office took of his reports.~~In the Congo case,~~ because he doubted government intentions in the absence of a demand from public opinion, he lent his name and money to E.D. Morel's popular campaign to press for reform, and in the Putumayo case, he made a series of personal interventions because he felt official pressure was unlikely to be sufficient.²⁷

On April 23, 1916, Easter Sunday, three days after he had been captured at Banna Strand in the process of attempting to land 20,000 rifles from the German ship known as the *Aud*, Casement was interviewed by Scotland Yard's intelligence service. Basil Thomson, assistant chief commissioner of Scotland Yard was present, as was Captain Reginald ("Blinker") Hall, chief of naval intelligence at the Admiralty, Major Frank Hall, an M15 officer "involved in tracking Casement,"²⁸ and Superintendent Quinn. Basil Thomson wrote to Major Ivon Price, head of military intelligence in Dublin:

Please keep us informed as to the movements of Sinn Fein suspects and any action taken in regard to them. Even if no arrests have been made or if arrests are undesirable, the connection of the leaders of the Irish Volunteers with this business will be most material in proving "hostile or enemy association" for action under DRR 14 B.²⁹

Immediately before the Easter Rising, Volunteers were ~~to be~~ detained under the Defence of the Realm Act possibly by association with Casement. After the Rising, this first German plot that allegedly involved the high treason of Casement for consorting with the "King's enemies outside the realm" ~~remained the legal ground for executions and mass internments.~~ Shows that iIn the then-contemporary British representation, Casement was the leader of the Rising. British intelligence had detailed information on Casement from the time of his arrival in Christiania in late 1914. From the files it seems as if Captain Hall is the person liaising with agents on the ground in Christiania, Copenhagen, and elsewhere who are reporting on Casement.³⁰ He also appears to ~~have be~~ coordinated ing information from other sources. He ~~had s~~ letters from Casement's brother Tom in Pretoria, dated November 1914, and ~~wrote ites~~ to Kell on December 23, 1914: "Decidedly interesting when read in conjunction with following extracts from Casement letter to Professor Eoin MacNeill forwarded to the Foreign Office by Findlay."³¹ Intelligence sources ~~They~~ had opened his mail, investigated his

²⁷ This is particularly the case in relation to the Congo Free State where he directed the public campaign in close communication with his great friend, E.D. Morel.

²⁸ Jeffrey Dudgeon has pointed out that Frank Hall was an Ulsterman who had been military secretary of the Ulster Volunteer Force after its formation; see Dudgeon, *Roger Casement: The Black Diaries with a Study of his Background, Sexuality and Irish Political Life* (Belfast: Belfast Press, 2002), 481-4.

²⁹ Thompson to Major Ivon Prince, 22 April 1916, KV 2/7, National Archives, Kew. See also Frank Hall, War Office to Major Ivon Price, Dublin Castle, 22 April 1916, KV 2/7, National Archives, Kew: "You should get all available evidence with regard to these parties working in conjunction with the landing of arms at Ardfert. This is imperative as it may be (useful?) for the purposes of establishing "hostile association" of Irish Volunteers under DRR 14 B."

³⁰ The British Admiralty Naval Intelligence section had cut most German telegraphic communications lines early in the war. Through a series of fortunate and serendipitous events, they also effectively had broken the German codes. See Patrick Beesly, *Room 40: British Naval Intelligence 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984). Room 40 and other security sections were very *au fait* with all of Casement's communications from and to Germany. For example, see a communication dated early 1915 about the so-called "Findlay affair," in which Hall appears to be taking a leading role: "Dear Hall, This looks more like business but I fear it may fizzle out leaving Findlay looking an ass"; letter to Hall, 1915, KV 2/6/95, National Archives, Kew.

³¹ Hall to Kell, 23 December 1914, KV2/6, National Archives, Kew.

associates, and intercepted his letters to John Devoy and Joseph McGarrity in the United States and others. ~~And since~~ Through the broken German codes and prisoner exchanges -they had firsthand testimony on his attempted conversion of Irish prisoners, his associations with the German Prime Minister Bethmann Hollweg, with the Kaiser and the upper echelons of the German General Staff, and with the press; aspects of -the case against him were as effectively in place long before he landed in Ireland on Good Friday 1916.³² From this perspective, Casement was the leaders' leader, and the legalities of any dealing with potential rebels could potentially be subsumed under his treason and the charge of "consorting with the King's enemies outside the realm."

From early 1915, according to Intelligence files released in 1995,³³ Casement's bank accounts were opened, revealing amongst other details that he shared a joint account at the Hibernian Bank College Green with Douglas Hyde for the payment of teachers in the Gaeltacht school on Tawin. There were c-Cheques to Francis Bigger and John Quinn are presumably for cash; cheques to Bulmer Hobson for payment. The chain of Casement's connections and associates was well-known. His Royal Irish Constabulary file became active from the same date, though it gathered information from previous years.³⁴

The complex story of Casement's years in Germany and policy in relation to him while in prison in the summer of 1916 merit further exploration.³⁵ It was thought that almost all of what he wrote in prison was actually destroyed,³⁶ because the authorities explicitly stated that they feared his status as a martyr in waiting, and there are detailed memoranda instructing the destruction or retention of most of his writings in prison. These are mostly annotated as

³² This material was added to by direct communication from the Foreign Office representative in Copenhagen. For example, see Secret Telegraphic Communication, Monday, 20 September 1915, sent 8:00 p.m., received in London, 21 September 9:40 a.m., KV 2/6, National Archives, Kew. It includes the following report from "C": "There is a curious though none the less persistent feeling amongst quite important persons in Germany that the above is in the pay of the British government. Amongst the many arguments for this are the following: (a) That as it is noticed that he is received into the best circles both officially and personally, it is obvious that he is not a person paid by these officials as they would never receive personally anyone they paid. (b) His manner is considered charming, but it is noticed that he appears to devote his chief attention to persons who influence, directly or indirectly, either the public opinion or relations with Foreign Powers. That he is kept informed to an extraordinary degree, as to movements, both prospective and in execution, of the troops on all fronts. (c) It is generally considered by persons of the above persuasion, that the whole story of his attempted assassination is an extremely well laid scheme h, as is proved by the fact that the individual responsible still remains in his post etc. etc. (d) As a reward, if the above person escapes with his life, which some persons consider doubtful, he will be given a high position in the English Government, and, in order to still further enhance this position, he will be allowed to carry out with success a law sanctioning HOME RULE. I may say that there are many other statements but the above will show what is being said. *Assuming that, after investigation as to the supporters of this movement, it was decided that there was something in it would you sanction a scheme being submitted whereby the matter could be so arranged that evidence could be manufactured by which the position of the man would be rendered untenable.* [Emphasis added]

³³ See in particular "Authorisation to open all mail addressed to Roger Casement c/o Allison, 9 Farringdon St. one of his usual London bases," KV2/6 folio 58, National Archives, Kew.

³⁴ See CO 904/195, National Archives, Kew.

³⁵ See KV2/6, National Archives, Kew, in particular K/V 2/ 6/81417 for intelligence material gathered on Casement's actions in Germany through the recorded testimony of prisoners apparently exchanged for German prisoners of war early in 1916. This material substantiated the charge of treason by providing firsthand testimony from former prisoners of war in Germany who Casement had attempted to suborn from their allegiance at Limburg and other camps. There is substantial material reporting activities in Germany, for example the document "Casement travels frequently to neutrals," but how reliable that material is remains debatable.

³⁶ See messages on file advising destruction of material at HO 144 /1637/311643/176.

“done,” and there is very little material on the official files for the prison period, though there is copious material in, for example, the files of his defence brief, George Gavan Duffy.

I have however discovered one cache of material apparently written by Casement in prison on file. It is difficult to know why it has survived; most likely the explanation lies in the confusing and confused moving around of materials from one file to another in the late summer of 1916 while further research was being done into his sexual life lest it be required (it was not), and the fact that it was deemed to be inaccessible to a wider public in any case. It consists of an an extensive cache of ~~moderately~~ interesting material that reveals aspects of his thinking in his last months and replicates types of material about Casement that can be found elsewhere on other files—appeals for clemency, testimonies of those who knew him. But also in that file box, in a different ~~and more interesting~~ category, is a copy of a widely available version of his ~~key~~ political writings on Ireland as collected in 1914. The text is annotated in Casement’s own handwriting, it seems, in the weeks before his death in August 1916. It is therefore a unique source in that the text constitutes what he viewed as his key writings on Ireland in the context of history, pre-First World War politics and international relations, with annotations delineating some his later reflections and some amplification of his arguments.

This text is entitled *Ireland, Germany and the Freedom of the Seas: A Possible Outcome of the War of 1914*, an original version of which was discussed as being ready for publication while Casement was staying with Joe McGarrity on the date of the fatal shootings at Bachelors Walk after the landing of guns from the *Asgard* at Howth on July 26, 1914.³⁷ Published in New York and Philadelphia in 1914, this is the text of some of his then more recent political writings, later editions of which have appeared under the title *The Crime against Europe*.³⁸ Casement apparently had access while in prison before his execution in 1916 to this 1914 publication. On the cover sheet he has written “50,000 sold and distributed.” He has also written on the cover-page “This is ‘The Crime against Ireland’ minus one (VII) ‘The Elsewhere Empire.’”

The actual text consists of thirty-nine densely printed double columned pages and is a collection and revision of some formerly published and some unpublished writings written between 1911 and 1914, retained in the Home Office files heavily annotated in Casement’s hand.³⁹ The draft pages in his own hand that are in other connected ~~also contained on this~~ files detail comparisons with previous attempts to bring foreign powers to assist earlier attempts by Irish revolutionaries to fight for independence—the French at the end of the eighteenth century, and the Spanish before that.

In a preface, specific to the American editions entitled “To Free the Seas, Free Ireland,” Casement prison annotations notes that “Ireland, Germany and the Freedom of the Seas” was written “in the thick of the Carson fight,” and that he showed it in full to only three people: “Bigger, Alice Green and Hobson.” These were the three to whom he was closest intellectually and politically, and the essays that constitute these writings reveal the extent to

³⁷ There does not appear to be ~~an the~~ author’s name on the front page. It is listed as “Published by the Irish Press Bureau,” New York and Philadelphia, 1st September 1914, and has a cover price of ten cents.

³⁸ Herbert O. Mackey, ed., *The Crime against Europe: The Writings and Poetry of Roger Casement* (Dublin: C.J. Fallon, 1958); and then, latterly, *Roger Casement: The Crime Against Europe with The Crime against Ireland and Other Writings*, intro. Brendan Clifford (Belfast: Athol Books, 2003)

³⁹ HO 144/1636/311643/44/32A, National Archives, Kew.

which his passionate interest in Irish history—shared with Alice Stopford Green,⁴⁰ whose historical writings he admired, encouraged, and supported—partly drove his analysis of contemporary politics.⁴¹ These texts, supplemented in Herbert Mackey’s 1958 edition, *The Crime against Europe*, and in the recent Athol Books text with a longer and later piece not available to Casement in prison, “The Causes of the War and the Foundations of the Peace,” constitute the core of his political historical analysis and provide a basis for understanding his politics and political choices and actions.⁴² In the new preface to the 1914 edition, which he states “was written in New York about 2 or 3 Sept 1914,”⁴³ Casement frames his earlier writings, on the verge of his departure for Germany, to emphasize his support for Germany, his desire to keep the U.S. out of the war, and his strategy of availing of the war to gain German support for an Irish revolution. We know that Alice Stopford Green ~~did not would not have~~ endorsed his pro- German ~~choices~~views at this time. Retrospectively, he stated~~s~~ that all of the constituent parts “furnish in outline the case for a German-Irish alliance as this presented itself to the writer’s mind when the world was still at peace.”⁴⁴

The most then-recently written was “The Causes of the War and the Foundations of the Peace,” written in 1916 and obviously neither contained in this edition nor annotated. The titles given for the sections in later editions mentioned above are not present in the Philadelphia edition to which Casement has access, and it is not clear that he himself actually gave them their subsequent or in some cases original titles. For ease of identification, I will use the titles here. On page 3 of the Philadelphia edition, as part of the original text, Casement has a two page introduction entitled “To Free the Seas Free Ireland” in which he details when the subsequent sections were actually written. There he states “The following articles were begun in 1911 under the title ‘Ireland Germany and the Next War’ and were intended for private circulation only among a few interested friends of both countries.”⁴⁵ His handwritten annotation at the blank page reads

The opening section is wrong—“both countries” is a fiction. The mms were shown to three persons only—all in Ireland. One a woman and two men. The “idea” of the thing I suppose came to me gradually—from reading, thinking and witnessing the daily growing press hatred in England against Germany.⁴⁶

In chapter 2, part I, or “The Keeper of the Seas,” he notes, “I wrote one day on board the SS Thames on my way out to Barbados to go up the Putumayo, the second time. I never looked at it for months.” Chapter 3, part II, or “The Balance of Power,” was written in September 1912. On its first page is written “Written on the assumption (highly improbably) that the forthcoming Anglo-German War would be between the two antagonists alone.” Part III, or “The Enemy of Peace,” was written in March 1913, though Casement has amended this and

⁴⁰ ~~See earlier reference to I am currently writing an analysis of~~ Alice Stopford Green’s historical works in the context of her political networks, particularly her relationship with Roger Casement.

⁴¹ For a view of a “remembered past” in aspects of Roger Casement’s formation and an overview of his relationship with Alice Stopford Green see my “Casement, Colonialism and a Remembered Past.” The full extent of the historical basis of his political analysis is detailed in his extensive correspondence with Alice Green and Bulmer Hobson.

⁴² In his annotations he lists some of his later essays written while in Germany, including his essay on Sir Edward Grey and his attack on James Bryce’s investigation into the Belgian atrocities under the title “The Far-Extended Baleful Power of the Lie.”

⁴³ Casement, handwritten annotation to Casement’s *Ireland*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

added “Sept 1912 mostly.” Part IV, or “The Problem of the Near West—Turkey and the Balkans” was written in March 1913. Part V, or “The Duty of Christendom” was written from November to December 1913, Part VII was “Ireland, Germany and the Next War,” and finally Part VIII, “The Elsewhere Empire.”

These texts allow us to see how Casement deployed his historical understandings and his understandings of British high politics and aspects of the Foreign Office, [along with the](#) experience of decades of campaigning in liberal circles, into an apocalyptic view of the dangers to Ireland in the past, and more importantly the dangers for the future of Irish nationality that he believed his times presented.

On file, various authorities repeatedly reveal their anxiety about and awareness of his desire to see all of his work published. They confer on how best to avoid him attaining the martyrdom they know him to desire. Their approach to this, according to notes on file, is to destroy as much of his written material as they can get their hands on. The published material has, however, already been widely disseminated, and perhaps that is why they do not bother to go through it and read the annotations. Technically, all that he wrote over a period of three months in prison was the property of the state. Three days after his death, Thomson suggested that a considerable body of his material—probably the prison diaries to which he refers—and other material be destroyed. The file is annotated “done.”

For almost a year before the outbreak of war, which he, like others, predicted, Casement had formulated a future strategy based on the assumption that only in the context of an international war, and with the help of Britain’s enemy, could a plausible fight for Irish independence be fought. This is an analysis that he sells to John Devoy and that becomes current in Irish Volunteer circles. We have RIC reports outlining the sheer number of the Volunteer meetings he addressed with Eoin MacNeill, Pearse, and others in 1913.⁴⁷ He was one of the main architects of the Howth gunrunning of July 1914, which is why he spent so much time in Malahide, just beside Howth, in the months before going to the United States.⁴⁸ According to the RIC file, his last sighting in Ireland was on Volunteer business in Cushendall in July 1914.

One of his first publications for the nationalist cause was in support of an [earlier](#) anti-recruiting campaign ~~in 1904~~, a position which he constantly reiterated~~s~~ in the years before the war.⁴⁹ His economic analysis of Irish history [was](#) based on Elizabethan spoliation, land appropriation, and the eighteenth-century suborning of the possibility of an Irish nation by trade restrictions, and is the topic of extensive correspondence and exchanges with Alice

⁴⁷ See the RIC file on Casement, CO 914 /195, National Archives, Kew. The file lists the Ballymoney speech on October 24, 1913, meeting with MacNeill in Cork on December 14, and a series of others in early 1914 in Kilkenny, Tullamore, Athenry, and Waterford, with a concentration of northern speeches at Sixmiletown, Omagh, Carrickmacross, and Strabane. It is noted that his intimates are IRB men like Dr. McCartan of Gortin Tyrone, Bigger, Eugene Coyle, the curate in Fintona, and Fr. Hugo McGlynn of Strabane. Coyle, an “opponent” of the Hibernian interest in East Tyrone, later became a supporter of the Free State side in the civil war, though he broke with them on the Boundary Commission. McGlynn was a Redmondite who chaired a diocesan committee for Belgian refugees during the war. Other acquaintances or associates listed included Bulmer Hobson, John Mac Dermott, Dennis McCullough, Ernest Blythe James Connolly, and Alice Stopford Green.

⁴⁸ See the plea for clemency for Casement on grounds of mental instability from Rev Canon Lindsay of Malahide, also canon of Christ Church Cathedral Dublin, HO 144/1637/311643/67, National Archives, Kew. On July 22, 2016 he writes “He lived in my parish for several months in 1914...”

⁴⁹ See, for example, the article by Oscar Schweiner of the Berlin newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* on social conditions in Gorumna Island Galway. Casement, in April 1914, wrote of “young men deliberately kept poor to drive them into the British Army”; see Casement, *Irish Independent*, April 27, 1914.

Stopford Green. These historical arguments are, however, constantly buttressed with contemporary arguments—on hunger in Connemara, on the marginalization of Cork and Cobh, to continental (in particular German) trade through Hamburg, and on then contemporary Irish poverty that he argued made kes the British Army a strong economic temptation to young men.

Historically the desire of the state to admit Irishmen to the British army, and the consequent granting of Catholic Relief was, according to this analysis, no more than the desire to secure a cheap army for empire out of an appropriated people. Stopping recruiting for the British Army from Ireland became one of his main preoccupations.

The armies that overthrew Napoleon, the fleets that swept the navies of France and Spain from the seas, were recruited from this slave pen of English civilization. During the past 100 years probably 2 million Irishmen have been drafted into the English fleets and armies from a land purposely drained of its food. Fully the same number, driven by Executive controlled famines, have given cheap labour to England, have built up her great industries, manned her shipping, dug her mines and built her ports and railways while Irish harbours silted up and Irish harbours closed down. While England grew fat on the crops and beef of Ireland, Ireland starved in her own green fields and Irishmen grew lean in the strife of Empire.⁵⁰

He saw Edmund Spenser's reading of Ireland as key to later English desires to close off Ireland from Europe, and to control its representation abroad:

To represent the island as a poverty stricken land inhabited by a turbulent and ignorant race whom she has with unrewarded solicitude sought to civilise, uplift and educate has been a staple of England's diplomatic trade since modern diplomacy began.⁵¹

In expanding the metaphor of peon and hacenade, he wrote that if Ireland is the peon of the British Empire, "the books and the palaces are in London but the work and the wealth have come from the peons on the Irish Estate."⁵²

The main instrument of Britain's control of Ireland was, he argued, is the insistence that all trade, all representation, all narratives about Ireland weare processed through the other island. Ireland thus becomes in British self-narration and in stories reiterated that she tells to others a place apart. :

A race that she has with unrewarded solicitude sought to civilize, uplift and educate has been a staple of England's diplomatic trade since modern diplomacy began. To compel the trade of Ireland to be with herself alone; to cut off all direct communication between Europe and this second of European islands until no channel remained only through Britain; to impose the most abject political and economic servitude one people ever impressed upon another ; to exploit all Irish resources, lands, ports, people, wealth, even her religion, everything in fine that Ireland held, to the sole profit and advancement of England, and to keep all the books and rigorously

⁵⁰ Casement, "The Keeper of the Seas," in *The Crime against Europe: The Writings and Poetry of Roger Casement* (Dublin: C.J. Fallon, 1958), 23-24.

⁵¹ Ibid., 22-23.

⁵² Ibid, 23.

refuse an audit of the transaction has been the secret but determined policy of England.⁵³

It is possible to reconstruct what Casement was reading in this period. He read widely in all kinds of travel writings on Africa and South America. He presented the Monroe doctrine as a device to perpetuate British imperial control of the high seas, endorsed by Britain who alone could enforce it through that control to ensure that South America was earmarked for the English-speaking world; ~~More significantly, it~~ it could close off any European nation other than Britain from expansion. In return for the strengthening of capital interests in the city of London, South America could, according to Casement, become the United States's private back yard, ripe for future cultivation or further spoliation: "All European nations are deemed to be Asiatic in the eyes of England—France mattered until it was broken under Napoleon, Germany threatens now. A weak France is granted North African sops to preserve its silence."⁵⁴

By the time the war has started, Casement is horrified that the crimes of Leopold's Belgium, long silenced in Belgium, have, as he sees it, been transposed by the Foreign Office onto the Germans in Belgium. According to him, narratives of the mutilation of hands and the raping of nuns were peddled in Ireland by the Belgian cardinal to facilitate Irish recruitment into the British Army. His later piece "The Far-Extended Baleful Power of the Lie" acknowledges that there are atrocities by the Germans, but says that the claim that "murder, lust and pillage prevailed over many parts of Belgium on a scale unparalleled in any war between civilised nations during the last three centuries" was manifestly false comparatively, and designed to demonize Germany for propaganda purposes.

Casement is finally pushed into action in the Volunteers ~~not~~ by the opportunities of international war which he predicted ~~and but~~ by the substantiation of his conspiracy theories by the actions of Bonar Law, F.E. Smith, and the British army in attempting to destroy Home Rule through the case of Ulster. The most important document ~~which he has~~ in his possession, in his own opinion, is the evidence of a former assistant of Balfour's of what he calls "Balfourism and Crime"—a manuscript that detailed ~~ed~~ the role of Dublin Castle in constructing the "Parnellism and Crime" case, which ~~did was to do~~ vital ideological work for the Tories in rendering for propaganda purposes nationalism and crime as identical.⁵⁵

The founding of the Volunteers⁵⁶ was based, from Casement's perspective partly on the need to have some power, possibly with external aid from Germany, though that comes later, with which to challenge the kind of British settlement in Ulster that he believed ds to be inevitable.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ The reference is to the Agadir crisis. [\[Margaret – is there a text you're citing here?\] no.](#)

⁵⁵ See León Ó Broin, *The Prime Informer: A Suppressed Scandal* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971). As Casement said of papers received by Eoin MacNeill from a former Resident Magistrate who denounced "the Castle" to him in December 1913, they "record Balfourism and Crime in all its beauty and should be preserved at all costs and some day used." This is a reference to the so called "Parnellism and Crime" episode that lead to the Special Commission initiated under the Chief Secretaryship of Arthur Balfour. See Margaret O' Callaghan, *British High Politics and a Nationalist Ireland: Crime, Nationality and the Law under Forster and Balfour* (Cork: Cork UP, 1994)

⁵⁶ "We aimed at solving not the Irish question, that did not, for us, exist—not the 'Ulster question' whose origins we knew—but the English question, the parent of all the ills that afflicted and still afflicts Ireland"; see the copious 32A file, [National Archives, Kew](#).

This is confirmed by his letter written with Eoin MacNeill on the occasion of the Curragh mutiny.⁵⁷ The Germans effectively fail him during the war, but for complex reasons.⁵⁸

Although the file that details the collection “of affidavits on homosexual practices in Norway” from waiters and employees, Adler Christensen’s mother, also records a letter from Thomson to Blackwell about a talk that he had that day, July 26, 1916, with the American Ambassador Prie. This file shows the actions of the authorities in preparing a further case against Casement in the weeks before his hanging, lest that material prove necessary. It also suggests that the newly “collected” material was shown widely to Prie at this time and ~~It~~ also notes that something called “My Prison Diary” has been destroyed.⁵⁹

The survival therefore of the heavily annotated copy of his main publication, together with the much personal material at Home Office 144/1636/31163/32A, is all the more surprising. Casement lists here his publications in Germany of articles in English, all of which were translated into German and syndicated through the German-speaking press, mostly in 1915. In Berlin, many appeared in *The Continental Times*, edited by Aubrey Stanhope. They included the following topics: Sir Edward Grey; Lord Bryce’s report on German atrocities; Lord Kitchener, Ireland, and the War; Napoleon and Ireland; and an article on why he came to Germany.⁶⁰ According to Casement’s July 1916 notes on file they were all “being republished in Germany by Huber of Diessen of Bavaria.”⁶¹

“Ireland, Germany and the Next War” was published, he notes, initially under the pseudonym of Shan Van Vocht.⁶² Written in February 1913 he writes that the *nom de plume* was given by the editor Padraig Colum, and it was published in *The Irish Review* on July 30, 1913. “Ireland and the War” was initially published in *The Continental Times* on October 30, 1915 and reprinted in two parts in *The Gaelic American* on 15th and 22nd of January, 1916. He also notes that his piece “The Elsewhere Empire” was “bought up by Indian students in Dublin.”⁶³ “Why I Went to Germany” was written before leaving Germany for Ireland in April 1916 and not published until August 10, 1916, a week after his death, in the New York *Evening Mail*.

Casement has been, as Sir Ernley Blackwell and Sir Edward Troup wished,⁶⁴ buried intellectually for almost a century. If discussed, as the issue of the authenticity or not of the diaries is discussed in every decade, he has become, as Lucy McDiarmid has probably correctly surmised, at least partly a means through which people can talk about sex. Intriguing though those conversations have been, Casement has the capacity to change

⁵⁷ Roger Casement and Eoin MacNeill, “‘Cat out of the Bag’: The Curragh Coup’s Significance,” letter to the editor, *Irish Independent*, 27 March 1914.

⁵⁸ See Reinhard Doerries, *Prelude to the Easter Rising: Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2000) for the best account of Casement’s period in Germany. See also Xander Clayton, *Aud* (Plymouth: George Alexander Clayton, 2007).

⁵⁹ HO 144/1637/311643, National Archives, Kew.

⁶⁰ See Angus Mitchell, *Roger Casement* (Dublin: O’ Brien Press, 2013) for an overview of Casement’s career and new material on his publications in Germany, particularly 226-66. See also Mitchell’s “John Bull’s Other Empire: Roger Casement and the Press, 1898-1916” in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1875-1921*, ed. Simon Potter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 217-33.

⁶¹ Sir Roger Casement, *Irland, Deutschland und der Freiheit der Meere und andere Aufsätze: Casements Redden nach seiner Gefangennahme* (Diessen von München: Huber, 1917).

⁶² Title taken from the Belfast journal edited by Alice Milligan and “Ethna Carbery”; see Catherine Morris, *Alice Milligan and the Irish Cultural Revival* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013)

⁶³ See Agatha M. Bullet, *Roger Casement und Indien: Von Agatha M Bullet, Hrsg.vom Europäischen Zentralkomitee der Indischen Nationalisten* (Stockholm: Dahlberga Forlags A-B, 1918).

⁶⁴ See O’Callaghan, “Casement, Colonialism and a Remembered Past.”

potentially much of what ~~almost everything~~ we believe about pre-revolutionary Ireland. He provides the most sustained analysis we have of Ireland in the context of empire over three centuries.

Any close reading of the early history of the Volunteers will put him at the center of the story, not on the fringes. The German plan is his, and despite John Devoy's later retractions, the language of "gallant allies in Europe" clearly refers to the alliance he had signed on behalf of an Irish government in waiting, with the Germans. The legalities around the executions ~~detention~~ of suspects after 1916 depended partly upon seeing all suspects as part of Casement's conspiracy of treasonable dimensions with the "King's enemies outside the realm." And finally, Casement's position makes it clear that 1916 was never intended to be a blood sacrifice.